

CHELSEA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

FRANKFORT SCHOOL DISTRICT 157-C



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A comprehensive renovation and major addition has transformed Chelsea Intermediate School into a dynamic, welcoming learning environment that serves 800+ Grades 3-5 students. The project achieved the school district's goal of providing equitable learning environments in its three facilities, which also include a K-2 elementary and middle school. This is particularly important because all district students go through each of the three schools in their K-8 journey.

Today, Chelsea Intermediate School is a vibrant, light-filled environment in which the entire building is a teaching tool coherently organized to support a thriving learning community.

PROJECT BUDGET
\$37,999,300

FINAL COST
\$37,577,576



SCOPE OF WORK

Chelsea Intermediate School is reimagined through a major addition and comprehensive renovation of the existing school. A new façade, main entrance and outdoor plaza with significant site landscaping completes Chelsea's exterior and interior transformation.

Chelsea has been transformed by:

- **A major addition**
- **Comprehensive renovation**
- **New façade**
- **Strategic landscaping**
- **Significant site improvements**



SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Chelsea Intermediate School —is one of three schools operated by Frankfort SD 157-c, located in suburban Chicagoland. Its primary and middle schools received significant facility investments in earlier years.

The Chelsea Evolution

Since its construction in 1975, the Chelsea school facility, which originally consisted of two buildings, has served different grade levels. Over the decades, it was episodically renovated and expanded and, at one point, the two buildings were conjoined.

By 2010, the net result was inefficient, outmoded spaces evidenced by:

1. **Grade level students housed in disconnected locations**
2. **Multi-grade spaces scattered throughout building**
3. **Increased travel times due to circulation challenges**
4. **Lack of a central core; no cohesive organization of space and resources**

The district saved and planned for over ten years before starting the project. In 2019, the lead architect conducted a Feasibility Report and in 2020 put together a variety of concept design options. These were presented to the community, and with community support in 2021 the school board moved forward with an addition/renovation project.



Entry and Plaza



Before



After

Cafeteria



Before



After

STEM Rooms



Before



After

Classrooms



Before



After

Main Office



Before



After

Media Center



Before



After

CREATING CONSENSUS ON A DESIGN SOLUTION

Chelsea's transformation, based on a decade-long process of community engagement, budgeting and planning, elevates the quality of its learning environments to the level of the district's other schools, thus achieving the community's goal of providing equitable learning opportunities for all students from Pre-K through 8th grade.

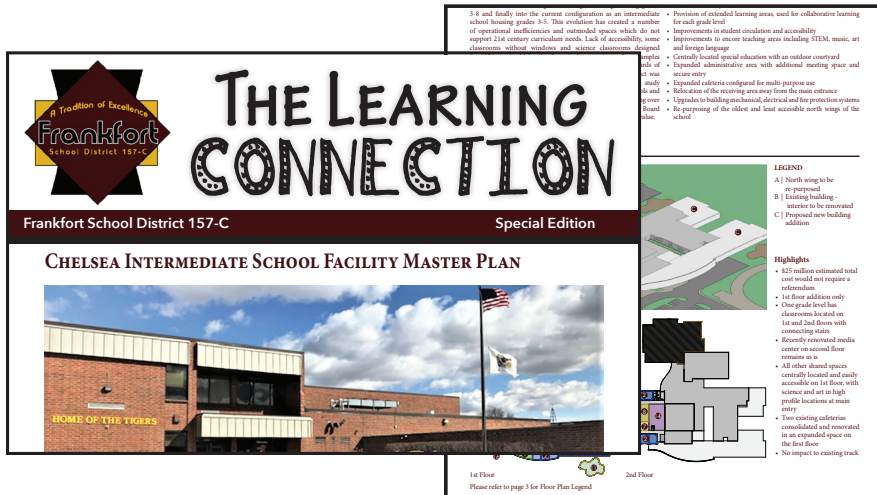


COMMUNITY INPUT

Throughout the process, from facilities planning to design implementation, input was gathered from district administrators, teachers, staff, students and community members. In 2019, the district commissioned its longtime architect partner to conduct a feasibility and study which assessed the school's deficits and yielded three options for moving forward:

1. Renovate the existing building
2. Expand and renovate the existing building, including extensive site work
3. Design and build a new facility on an existing district property

In 2020, a district newsletter was circulated throughout the community followed by a phone and online survey that informed the school board's 2021 decision to expand and renovate the existing building.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Chelsea Intermediate School occupies a 23-acre site in a residential area of this suburban community. The school is surrounded on all sides by trees and open green areas. The school's transformation prioritized wellness by maximizing visual connection to the natural environment and access to natural light.





1 Extended Learning Areas

Large, flexible extended learning areas are designed for up to two full classroom groups with a focus on collaboration and project-based learning.

2 New Entry and Plaza

Chelsea's main entry has been transformed with an expansive curving canopy and landscaped plaza area. The double-height vestibule provides visual connection to the outdoors.

3 STEAM Center

The Media Center, STEM, and Art Rooms are co-located to achieve a physical and visual connection.



The new cafeteria, designed for a variety of functions, features a learning stair for informal gathering and teaching. The space incorporates a variety of technology options to support student and community presentations.

Chelsea's new addition also created space for an interior courtyard that is used for outdoor learning and contained recess options for special needs students.



The school's new façade includes a main entry with a double-height secure entry vestibule. The plaza outside, which abuts the drop-off/pick-up area and is also a gathering space, illustrates the school's passive security design with its strategic layout of newly landscaped spaces. Concrete bench seating and raised planter beds provide natural barriers for additional building protection.





Displaced dirt from the construction process was used to create a berm that forms a natural safety, visual and acoustic barrier between the school and a heavily trafficked adjacent roadway.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The mission of District 157-C is to prepare all students to be confident lifelong learners and productive citizens by challenging them to reach their fullest potential and by providing a quality educational environment in partnership with family and community.

The educational vision for the transformation of Chelsea Intermediate School is that the entire facility can be used as a teaching tool, providing the space and resources for teachers and students to realize their full potential.

This vision finds its expression in Chelsea's colorful, light-filled environment, a school community in which grade level students are clustered in neighborhoods, each branded with distinctive colors that also assist with wayfinding.







The STEM lab, art room and media center are co-located with both visual and physical connections between the spaces. These interconnected subjects now share a centrally located hub and advanced spaces.





Outside the renovated classrooms, large, flexible extended learning and breakout areas support informal learning. Throughout the school, wide corridors with seating niches offer flexibility of use and provide students with a sense of ownership of their school.



RESULTS

Since its fall 2023 opening, the “new” Chelsea Intermediate School has been applauded. The community and district have achieved their mutual goal of providing an equitable, high-quality environment in each of its three schools, providing comparable learning and development opportunities from Pre-K through 8th grade.



RESULTS

In a fall 2024 post-occupancy survey, the majority of teachers agreed with the statement that “Overall, the renovated and new teaching areas function well for my teaching needs and my students’ learning needs.” Significantly, most teachers also agree that “Grade level branding and common area color blending has been a successful incorporation into the school and aids wayfinding.”



STEWARDING A COMMUNITY'S RESOURCES



From a sustainability perspective, the district achieved cost savings of public resources, minimized the carbon impact of tearing down an existing building and mitigated the need for all-new building materials by opting for renovation and expansion over completely new construction.



In the context of wellness, Chelsea's design prioritizes a wealth of natural light, which is supplemented by LED fixtures. The building incorporates biophilic design elements such as visual connection to the outdoor environment and the use of natural materials.



Displaced dirt from construction forms a berm to buffer a busy street both visually and acoustically. The berm is used as a sledding hill during the winter months.



Additional site improvements included the addition of an above-ground storm water detention pond (adjacent to the berm), which supports natural foliage.



The school's outdoor recreation spaces are open to the community, which has minimal park district facilities.



HONORS AND AWARDS

Award of Distinction

2024 Illinois Association of School Boards Exhibition
of Educational Environments

Outstanding Project for Early Childhood School/ Elementary School Renovation/Addition

2024 Learning by Design



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

“ This project stands as a clear reflection of the firm’s creative vision and deep understanding of how space and design can enhance teaching and learning. The reimagined facility not only met the technical and logistical needs of our staff and students but did so in a way that honors the identity of the school and community.”

Doug Wernet, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Frankfort School District 157-C

“ Though Chelsea has always been a welcoming environment that supports teaching and learning, we are thrilled with the renovations and the addition that have modernized our school, making it an even more beautiful, safe and stimulating environment.”

Rachel Newcomb, Principal

“ My fifth graders were amazed at Chelsea’s transformation. They think the entire building is brighter and more inviting. We already have top-notch teachers and now students also have modern spaces to learn, create and flourish!”

Katie Schubert, Parent





CHELSEA
INTERMEDIATE
SCHOOL